



DMHAS Update

March 2023

Message from Commissioner Nancy Navarretta

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Happy Spring! As we celebrate the slow return of milder temperatures and longer days, there is plenty of news to report from OOC. March features several behavioral health-related observances, including Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) and National Drug & Alcohol Facts Week. In this issue you will hear more about both, along with news of a long-awaited reopening and a program that brings much joy at Connecticut Valley Hospital. This month we will also begin highlighting DMHAS employees across our statewide service system, beginning with one of our longest serving CEOs, as well as one of our newest.

As always, I welcome your feedback. Feel free to get in touch with any questions or suggestions.



Statewide Expansion of FEP Services

DMHAS, in collaboration with the Program for Specialized Treatment Early in Psychosis (STEP) at CMHC/Yale University School of Medicine, and the Department of Children and Families (DCF), is pleased to announce that STEP is assisting in the development of a statewide plan for First Episode Psychosis (FEP) services. STEP has been internationally recognized for early intervention services (EIS) provided to individuals with recent onset schizophrenia spectrum disorders or first-episode psychosis within New Haven and surrounding towns.

The statewide scale-up of FEP services will include Early Detection and Assessment Coordinators (EDACs) in each of the five DMHAS regions. The EDACs will offer outreach to individuals experiencing a recent onset of schizophrenia spectrum disorders or first-episode psychosis, conduct screenings/assessments using specific scales, provide outreach and education to family members, collaborate with treatment providers and connect them with clinical consultation and trainings via STEP's Learning Collaborative. DMHAS-operated and funded Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) have nominated some individuals to participate in the first training cohort that will start in late April. STEP is continuing to develop workforce development and informatics products for the statewide project.

For more information, please contact Julianne Giard at Julianne.Giard@ct.gov.

Problem Gambling Awareness Month



**PROBLEM GAMBLING
AWARENESS MONTH**

→ AWARENESS • ACTION

Problem Gambling Awareness Month (PGAM) is a grassroots campaign designed to help raise awareness of the prevention, treatment and recovery services available for those adversely affected by gambling. This nationwide awareness campaign brings together a wide range of stakeholders, including public health organizations, treatment providers, advocacy groups and gambling operators. Groups across America hold conferences, air Public Service Announcements, provide counselor trainings, host health screening days, run social media campaigns and many other activities to increase public awareness of problem gambling and the availability of prevention, treatment and recovery services.

DMHAS facilitated and hosted a variety of in-person and virtual training events all month long with our collaborative partners. Topics included recovery support services available in Connecticut, sports betting, gambling among at-risk populations (such as veterans and the LGBTQIA+ community) and gambling as a lead risk factor for suicide.

DMHAS has partnered with [MCCA](#) to bring a new mobile resource van to Connecticut. This new resource will provide gambling education and other resources to the public on prevention, treatment, recovery support services, and the [voluntary self-exclusion portal](#). The van is available to attend trainings, events, health fairs, and other community gatherings across the state. To schedule the resource van, visit www.responsibleplayct.org and click on Request the Resource Van.

PROBLEM GAMBLING AFFECTS THE WHOLE FAMILY. WE CAN HELP.

PROBLEM GAMBLING HELPLINE

If you or someone you know has a gambling problem and wants help
CALL 1-888-789-7777 OR VISIT CCPG.ORG/CHAT

CONFIDENTIAL • HELPLINE/CHAT • 24/7 • FREE





National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week®, or NDAFW, is an annual, weeklong health observance that inspires dialogue about the science of drug use and addiction among youth. It provides an opportunity to bring together scientists, students, educators, healthcare providers, and community partners to help advance the science and address youth drug and alcohol use in communities and nationwide. It was launched in 2010 by scientists at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to stimulate educational events in communities so teens can learn what science has taught us about drug use and addiction.

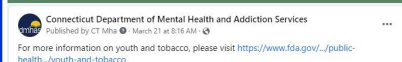
DMHAS, along with community partners in each of Connecticut's five regions participated, sharing facts and information about vaping, nicotine, cannabis, alcohol, and fentanyl. Here are a sampling of the social media posts that were shared during the week of March 20-26. For more information, please visit the [NDAFW page](#).



NDAFW₂₀₂₃
National Drug & Alcohol
Facts Week

Join us **March 20-26, 2023**

Learn more at
nida.nih.gov/ndafw

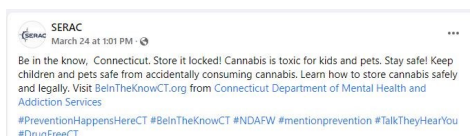


Many teens underestimate how addictive nicotine can be and vaping has become a serious health problem in the US.



Click below for more information

#NDAFW



STAY SAFE!
Keep
children
and pets
safe from
accidentally
consuming
cannabis.



ALCOHOL
can impair youth development
causing:

Changes in brain
development

Reduced estrogen and
testosterone levels

Impaired physical
growth



Valley View Café Returns!

The long-awaited return of Connecticut Valley Hospital's Valley View Café is almost upon us! Re-opening on April 4, 2023, the café will feature a new name, new look, and new menu. **Valley View To Go**, located at 12 Joyce Drive in Middletown, will feature breakfast sandwiches, club sandwiches, salads, seasonal soups, wraps, burgers, desserts, and hot and cold beverages.



Profile: Susan Niemitz, Capitol Region Mental Health Center

Susan Niemitz, LCSW, is CEO of Capitol Region Mental Health Center (CRMHC). CRMHC is the local mental health authority in Hartford and surrounding communities, operating under the auspices of DMHAS. CRMHC provides an array of innovative clinical and community-based services to individuals struggling with psychiatric disabilities, frequently with co-occurring substance use and/or medical concerns.

Sue is responsible for overseeing all clinical and administrative functions across two sites and ensuring the smooth operation of the facility, as well as 19 affiliated agencies, contracted by DMHAS in order to deliver quality behavioral health services to over 2,000 people a year.

A proven clinical and administrative leader in behavioral health, most recently she served on the Hartford Mayor's task force to implement a Civilian Crisis Response Team, expanded CRMHC's Mobile Crisis services from 12 hours a day, five days a week to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and increased specialty residential beds by 33%. She also oversaw the development of an on-site, DPH-licensed primary care clinic. Trained in EMDR, she previously specialized in complex trauma and co-occurring concerns as well as working with families of homicide victims and has an abiding belief in people's ability to heal and grow. Currently, she enjoys tackling complex systemic issues, providing clinical case consultations, bringing together collaborations and partnerships, and mentoring future leaders.

In addition to her many other accolades, Sue was recently nominated by the Greater Hartford Chapter of [Soroptimist International](#) as one of 31 women to be honored for Women's History Month.

Profile: Sarah Gadsby, River Valley Services

With the support of dedicated River Valley Services (RVS) employees, service delivery has grown over this last year to support those RVS serves. They onboarded a new ACT Team in the midst of mass retirements and celebrated the one year anniversary of the CIT program in collaboration with the Middletown Police Department. RVS also expanded the role and outreach efforts of its community liaison to engage individuals in need of services. Additionally, they have expanded the roles of Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) and now have an RSS embedded in each of their outpatient programs. Other programs, including CSP, YAS, Mobile Response Team, Respite, Admissions, Liaison, Transitional Residential and Housing, are serving more people than ever. The staff's commitment to RVS' clients have allowed them to respond to the growing demand for services, while continuing to provide quality care for the people and families they currently serve.

As new CEO, Sarah Gadsby expresses excitement about the future and direction of RVS. As an organization they will be moving forward in expanding and providing quality comprehensive, evidence-based, recovery oriented services that treat and value the whole person while promoting a work environment that fosters inclusiveness, transparency and open communication.

Pet Therapy at Connecticut Valley Hospital

Elizabeth Taylor, DMHAS' Chief Compliance Officer, often brings her dog Oliver to CVH's Woodward Hall to take part in Pet Therapy. About this experience she says, "It has been our privilege to be able to visit as part of pet therapy. I want to recognize the team at Woodward who take time to bring patients down to the Florida room to visit with Oliver. I know that they are busy with many other things in their day, but I have a front row seat to how much they care for (and about) their patients. Sometimes the patients are already in the room waiting for us to arrive and when Oliver walks in the room, there is laughter, smiles and outreached arms to visit with him. They have even made an 'Oliver Board' in the hallway. I always leave there with this overwhelming feeling of the true goodness of the people who care for the patients at DMHAS. Their gentle spirits, giving hearts and care is something to see. The interaction on the part of the patients with Oliver is nothing short of amazing, really."

Thanks to Elizabeth and the staff at Woodward for going above and beyond to make this experience possible for everyone involved!

